



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk (860)441-6640  
Town Manager  
(860)441-6630

**Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter.**

**Tuesday, April 10, 2007**

**7:00 PM**

**Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1**

#### **REGULAR MEETING**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.*

#### **2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.*

#### **3. Calendar and Communications**

*Mayor Watson explained that a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole had been recessed prior to this meeting to allow discussion of the first agenda item, and the special meeting would continue after discussion on the Animal Shelter.*

#### **4. Approval of Minutes**

##### **2007-0085 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)**

##### **RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole of March 8, 2007, March 20, 2007, and March 26, 2007 are hereby accepted and approved.

**A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to adopt.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

#### **5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

#### **6. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **2006-0239 Animal Shelter**

##### **Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that additional funds were previously appropriated to develop a more refined design and cost estimate for an animal shelter. This item is directly related to a CIP project in the FYE 2008 budget. The Town continues to look at a regional approach with the Humane Society.*

*Director of Public Works Gary Schneider noted a preliminary design and cost estimate were prepared by Noyes Vogt Architects. Mr. Schneider noted the total project cost, including bonding and short term notes, is \$1,384,070. This figure has not yet been reviewed by the Finance Director. Mr. Schneider noted the proposed location for the building.*

*Mary Clark of Noyes Vogt Architects reviewed the interior layout of the building which includes 18 kennels of which three are isolation kennels, and a separate area for cats. Ms. Clark described interior finishes.*

Councilor Sheets expressed concern with the cost of the project and asked if estimates were developed for a 10-run kennel. Chief Kelly Fogg noted the Animal Control Officer suggested the number 18, versus the 25 that the Town has now. The Town did not review the number of animals, but considered the requirements stated by the Animal Control Officer. The number averages 400 per year, but is down somewhat due to vacancies in Navy housing. Because of turnover, the Town would rarely have all 18 runs filled, but there may be a number of runs that need cleaning. The cost for the runs is approximately \$68,000 for two runs.

Town Manager Oefinger noted a series of discussions and communications with the Humane Society regarding a regional facility. The Humane Society is now considering a phased development, with facilities for smaller towns rather than a full-blown regional facility. The Town's interest in a regional facility has not changed, and it was hoped that information on a regional facility and Town facility would be available at the same time. The Humane Society has not finalized their report because they are not sure of communities' interest, but Groton can not make any more of a commitment without knowing the Humane Society's business plan and the costs involved. Councilor Bond suggested inviting the Humane Society to meet with the Town Council.

Councilor Bartinik asked about regionalizing Groton's proposed facility. The Town Manager stated we can help out other communities, but this facility is not sized to be a regional facility. Councilor O'Beirne suggested continuing with our process as if the project is going to referendum in November, and continuing to work with the Humane Society.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Scott, to recommend a resolution to begin the ordinance process for the Animal Shelter.

Discussion followed on the cost of the project and how to factor in any private contributions. Councilor Streeter suggested that there should be a contingency plan if the referendum is turned down by the voters. Town Manager Oefinger suggested that the Town can move ahead with both the local and regional alternatives because the ordinance process can be stopped at any time. The Town Manager then reviewed the various funding options. Councilor Sheets suggested a referendum on \$750,000 with the balance of the funds raised by the community. Councilor O'Beirne objected to bonding for less than the full amount of the cost of the shelter. Councilor Bartinik agreed that the project, whatever the number, should go to the voters. Councilor Sheets asked for an estimate on a 10-run facility noting a declining dog population. Councilor Bond moved the question but there was no second.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to amend the motion to include the cost figure of \$1,384,070.

The motion to amend carried by the following vote:

**In Favor:** 7 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott and Councilor Streeter  
**Opposed:** 2 - Councilor Bond, Councilor Sheets

Discussion followed on encouraging community efforts to continue fundraising, and addressing that situation in the wording of the ordinance. A Councilor asked if the Groton Animal Foundation would be willing to donate to upgrading the existing facility if the voters do not pass the referendum.

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Votes:** In Favor: 7 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott and Councilor Streeter  
Opposed: 2 - Councilor Bond and Councilor Sheets

*The Committee recessed at 8:05 p.m. to continue the special meeting, and reconvened at 8:25 p.m.*

2007-0082

**Revaluation Phase-In in Accordance with PA 06-176 and PA 06-148**

**Recommended for a Resolution**

*Committee comparing 2005 and 2006 grand list numbers, and showing the assessment and mill rate changes under a three-year phase-in proposal. The scenarios assume no changes to the grand list and do not reflect fluctuations in personal property assessments. Councilor Sheets asked about the shift in tax burden in the amount of \$7.6 million from the industrial/commercial sector to the residential sector and Mr. Philip stated that figure has not been calculated by the Town.*

*The next table in the handout shows how revenues will be generated under full implementation versus a three-year phase-in which would in effect increase the percentage of revenue generated by personal property and motor vehicles. The next table shows a summary of taxes paid for properties with various percentage increases in their assessments. A phase-in would benefit taxpayers whose assessments increased 40% (approximately 93% of the population). The real estate savings would be decreased somewhat by increases in motor vehicle taxes, depending on the type of motor vehicle. Councilor Kolnaski questioned the effect of phase-in on the districts and political subdivisions. Mr. Pandolfo explained that the districts' grand list values will decrease, which will affect their mill rates.*

*Councilor Sheets announced that she will be paying her "full freight" of taxes in the first year so that it doesn't appear she is benefiting from phase-in. Councilor Bond noted that it is easier to change the car you drive than the house that you live in. Councilor Streeter supports the phase-in and asked that people who asked for the phase-in direct their energy to the state.*

*Mr. Pandolfo then reviewed sample commercial assessments. Again, if assessments increased by more than 40%, they will see a savings with phase-in.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to recommend a resolution to proceed with a three-year phase-in of the 2006 revaluation.**

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 5 - Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

Opposed: 4 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Scott

**2003-0177 Renovations & Additions to Groton School Facilities - Phase I**

**Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger reported that the Town was denied a building code modification for Kolnaski School, and granted a modification for Northeast Academy and the interior courtyard windows at Fitch. A vendor for the new windows has not yet been chosen. Work continues around the windows.*

**2007-0030 Introduction of Senior Center Expansion Ordinance**

**A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2007-0031 Resolution Setting Public Hearing on Senior Center Expansion Ordinance**

**A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2007-0035 CGS 8-24 Referral to Planning Commission of Senior Center Expansion Ordinance**

**A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2007-0076 Health and Human Services/Met Life Grant**

**A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be**

Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

**2007-0084**

**Connecticut Section of PGA Foundation Grant**

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

**2007-0086**

**Mystic Rotary Club Grant - Arts Cafe**

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

**7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List**

*None.*

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

*None.*

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Scott, to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*